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To hold that redressing a wrong is an obligation of justice is to hold that some remedial action is (at least *prima facie*) necessary, something that morally *must* be done. The requirements of justice are usually understood to be ones that we are required to meet in all cases in which practical circumstances are not so dire or chaotic as to prevent our performance, and in which no other obligations of comparable gravity or urgency conflict. It is curious, then, how often arguments in recent theoretical literature on reparations for massive violence and abuse aim to show that reparations are impossible (or nearly impossible)—logically, morally, or practically—to make. Some claim to show that, regrettably, the very worst among actual injustices—atrocity, genocide, slavery, dispossession, and the like—are ones for which just repair is simply impossible. Yet these are the very cases for which we invoke the concept of reparations.

The absence of theory concerning justice in repair is curious as well. Despite vast and varied theoretical literatures on distributive and retributive justice, with competing positions grounded in philosophical commitments and tested by practical implications, the contemporary theoretical literature on reparative justice remains relatively slight. To begin with (and not inconsequentially), there is no uniformly agreed-upon terminology for the kind of justice in question. While many authors speak of corrective or (in an older tradition) commutative justice, others speak of compensatory, rectificatory, reparatory, or reparative justice, without clarification about whether these are labels for the same kind of theory or principle. There is relatively little in the way of genuine theories of reparative justice. Instead, many writers assume or invoke some version of the principle that justice requires a victim of wrongdoing to be returned by the wrongdoer to the state the victim enjoyed prior to, or would have enjoyed in the absence of, the wrong. This is, of course, Aristotle's conception of commutative (or corrective) justice. But whatever luster of authority that philosophical pedigree imparts to corrective justice, its more immediate referent is legal practice concerning remedies for unjust harms and losses, where responsible parties are required to make restitution to wronged individuals, or pay them compensation in proportion to harm or loss, in cases of tort or breach of contract. The principle of corrective justice is for the party at fault to restore the prior condition of the wronged party as nearly as possible by wiping out the consequences of the wrong.

To illustrate the poverty of such narrow thinking about reparative justice, I begin with a number of arguments in very recent theoretical writing on reparations that aim to show that justice in repair is defective or deceptive, where it is possible at all. I call them "impossibility arguments." They share the assumption that justice in repair is identical to or exhausted by corrective justice: justice in repair consists in cancelling out or reversing wrongful harms, typically by means of restitution or proportionate compensation. I propose that we see impossibility arguments, resting on the corrective justice premise, as *reductio* arguments: if reparations are necessary as obligations of justice, they must typically be possible; if certain assumptions about the nature of reparative justice

make them (nearly or commonly) impossible, then those assumptions must be incorrect. Reliance on the corrective justice assumption represents a failure to pursue an adequate theory of (what I will call) ‘reparative justice’, the broadest genus of justice in repair. A theory of reparative justice must expose its core concerns, guiding aims, and implications in practice. A useful theory would also identify the specific challenges and limits, including sources of resistance, to justice in repair.

I will offer in broad outline an account of the nature and guiding aim of reparative justice. My view takes as a reference point the new contemporary practice of political reparations for mass violence and systemic human rights abuse that emerged in the mid-twentieth century. This nascent practice, I will argue below, is an important reference point for the theory of reparative justice. It has resulted (and will no doubt continue to develop) through tests and struggles that can be seen as a set of experiments in discovering what constitutes and signifies justice in repair, however imperfect, for massive human rights crimes. An adequate account of reparative justice ought not only to cohere with but to explain prominent features of this new practice, especially for my purposes here, the diversity of measures that embody justice in repair. Finally, corrective justice ought to find a place within this broader account; I think it can be seen as one implementation of reparative justice within a certain institutional framework under certain political conditions.

Impossibility Arguments

A surprising number of current arguments concerning reparations for mass violence and political repression aim to show that reparative justice is impossible or irrelevant. A number of very recent papers illustrate common ways of thinking about reparative justice that result in impossibility arguments (Du Plessis and Peté 2007; Williams et al. 2012). Some arguments aim to deflate or abuse the idea of corrective justice in response to massive harms while others aim to displace the application of reparative justice in favor of “prospective,” “forwarding looking,” or distributive justice. All of these arguments assume that justice in repair of wrongs is corrective justice, so whether the standard of corrective justice is fulfilled determines whether reparations, envisioned or made, are true, real, “first-best,” adequate, serious, or meaningful as attempts at justice. The conclusion in various versions is that reparations are doomed to inadequacy; in the benign case they fail at doing justice while in the worst case they impede justice or violate it.

Gary Bass argues that reparations are at best a “noble lie,” since atrocity or genocide “cannot be undone” and compensation for such crimes “can never be adequate if measured against the depth of the wound” (Bass 2012: 167 and 171). Bass places reparations in parallel to war crimes tribunals, calling reparations a kind of war tort. By the corrective justice standard of “normal tort law” (169) that requires compensation in proportion to injury, reparations cannot be other than a “tokenistic measure ... to mollify the victims ... ” (167). While he recognizes that in some cases victims seek admissions and apologies instead of or in addition to compensation, justice demands proportionate compensation (171). This argument may seem simplistic, but I have heard versions of it on many occasions in discussion: reparations are inherently wrong-headed or incoherent because we cannot change the past or undo what has been done. It is worth remarking this kind of argument, not only for its equation of money payments with “real” justice, but because it is problematic in two other ways. No one is more acutely aware than victims of grave wrongs that there is no undoing many of them; what they seek as reparations can hardly be that. On the other hand, in some cases what has happened in the past may indeed be “undone” and is exactly what victims seek: return of land, restoration of rights and status, or the correction of false history.

Jon Elster, in the same volume, shares the idea that only material reparations are real reparations. But while Bass sees symbolic gestures as noble, or at least kindly, Elster scorns them. In the aftermath of widespread abuses, he argues, there are demands of distributive, retributive, restitutive, and compensatory justice to be met (Elster 2012: 80). When it comes to reparations, “Unless governments are willing to put their money where their mouth is,” it is nothing but “cheap talk,” including official apologies, which are likely to be “meaningless,” “absurd,” or “empty” (86). If, on the other hand, governments do fund reparations, they might unjustly “punish” non-victims or collateral victims if reparations draw resources away from compelling distributive justice demands (92–3). In any case, “full reparation at a large scale may be economically unfeasible” (93). Reparations, seen as corrective compensation, are probably unwise if not unjust, and often impossible.

Adrian Vermeule also assumes that reparation means compensation and that corrective compensation in reparations is chronically inadequate. But it is no more “disastrously unprincipled” than the ordinary legal system of corrective justice (Vermeule 2012: 163). In many such cases, Vermeule argues, inadequate and non-individuated compensation fails to satisfy justice but responds to an unprincipled sense of “rough justice,” an intuition that some compensation is better than none at all (151). While reparations are “indefensible on any plausible first-best criterion of justice,” and although there may be problems of unequal treatment among the compensated, and between the compensated and the uncompensated, this second-best is *not more* objectionable than what goes on in ordinary corrective justice. Vermeule thus defends reparations, but not because it answers to any principled idea or conception of justice appropriate to its own aims and demands. In other words, to say that it is rough justice is to say it’s not really justice at all, and to say that arbitrary compensation is better than none at all suggests that compensation, and only compensation, is at issue in the justice of repair.

Other arguments claim that reparations are not really best understood as an exercise of backward-looking justice at all, or that if they are so understood, they are superseded or preempted by forward-looking distributive justice demands. These arguments say, in effect, that if we seek justice in addressing wrongs we should adopt forward-looking or distributive justice as our guide (see also Wenar 2006 and Pierik 2006).

Writing on expropriated land in former communist countries, Christopher Kutz argues that corrective justice is a distinct and valid normative ground for justice in repair, and one that embodies ideals of accountability, but it is often “the wrong framework for considering reparative claims” (Kutz 2004: 302). Because corrective justice rectifies wrongful invasions of entitlements it is dependent for its force on a distributively just scheme of entitlements (297). As a consequence, a state has “no business” meeting reparations claims in those cases where it is unable to ensure minimally adequate standards of living generally (301). Applied generally, Kutz’s claim for the priority of distributive justice would put material reparations—and possibly symbolic ones that too have their cost—out of bounds in most cases. Given the serious distributive injustice of most societies even by minimal standards, limited resources should be put to the more fundamental work of distributive justice. If there is an argument for return of expropriated land, he argues, that argument will be one of distributive justice, where a group is entitled to its land as a condition of continuing its tradition and culture (310). Kutz sees the reparative value of symbolic recognition, including symbolic monetary payments, as acknowledgment of “the legal and moral subjectivity of the victims” (284). But he seems to see these as forward-looking questions of national identity being reconstructed or transformed (281–3). It is unclear what space is left in his scheme for a kind of reparative justice—neither corrective nor retributive—that grounds independent claims of redress for victims of specific grievous wrongs in the past.

Jeremy Webber argues that reparations (and other transitional justice measures) are often about “prospective justice” that seeks to bring parties into relationship on a just foundation for the future (Webber 2012: 104). Retrospective corrective justice, on the other hand, involves a “narrow optic” that simply seeks to reverse a wrongful transaction without addressing broader questions (121). Even payment often functions symbolically, as an “earnest” to lend weight to apologies or other measures that look forward to better future relations. (105). While reparations programs can partake of both backward-looking corrective compensation of individuals and constructively forward-looking reconstruction of relationships, these forms of justice operate by “very different logics” (107). They pose choices, and potentially dilemmas, about whether “to focus on the nature of past wrongs” or “to manage parties’ relations from here on” (108). So, where Kutz finds a dependency of corrective justice on distributive justice, Webber finds a tension between two independent and competing principles.

Webber illustrates this claim with the case of indigenous peoples, who may seek redress through actual land restitution but also seek to reconstitute their relationship through prospective claims to greater resources and autonomy (111–12). Indeed, Webber points out, they might be willing to forego retrospective remedies to secure self-determination (112). While this claim about some indigenous peoples might be correct, it establishes only that cases of profound, multifaceted, extended, and deeply destructive histories of relationship between people or peoples may give rise to multiple justice claims of distinct types that compete for resources, practical priority, and political traction. What it does not show is that reparative justice is exhausted by corrective justice and its modes of redress for the past are confined to that “narrow optic” of reversing an unjust transaction. If corrective justice alone redresses the past, then where corrective justice cannot be done the past cannot be the focus of justice, and justice claims must look to the future instead. What is missing is an examination of diverse ways, beyond corrective justice, that reparative justice can engage the past and attempt redress. In the choice between past and future, the actual scene of reparations struggles—the present—is not in view.

While Kutz has corrective and distributive justice as distinct normative principles with a priority ordering, and Webber sees them as principles with divergent temporal orientations that can be in tension, Michael Freeman sees corrective justice as a proper part of distributive justice, because it “specifies rightful (re)distribution” (Freeman 2012: 39). Surprisingly, however, Freeman argues that the focus on rectifying past wrongs makes reparative justice “conceptually distinct” and its claims possibly incompatible with distributive justice, especially in cases of historical injustice (14). The claim that reparative justice is a part of distributive justice, however, turns out to be no more than nominal, for reparative justice for Freeman is simply corrective justice, expressed in the principle, “If A wrongfully harms B, then in the absence of overriding considerations, A should compensate B for the wrong” (29); or, more concisely, “The first principle of reparative justice is that the wrongdoer pays” (39). Freeman rehearses many familiar objections to reparative justice so conceived. His paper ends, however, with the acknowledgment that “We have no comprehensive and integrated theory of reparative justice” (50). Given this, one wonders why Freeman is sure what its first principle is. In any case, he concludes that “... the more difficult it is to achieve reparative justice, the more it should be dominated by distributive justice” (49).

Current impossibility arguments echo a famous prototype, Jeremy Waldron’s argument that claims for repair of historical injustices such as land theft are likely to be “superseded” by present and future distributive claims. Waldron says, “... it is the impulse to justice now that should lead the way in this process, not the reparation of something whose wrongness is understood primarily in relation to conditions that no longer obtain” (Waldron 1992: 27). In variations on a theme, current impossibility arguments purport to show that what is done as reparations is deceptive or

wrong-headed; that it is merely “symbolic” in a deflationary sense; that what might be done is actually a different kind of justice, something other than justice, or something contrary to justice; or that reparative justice should be left aside in favor of another kind of justice. Most of all, it looks in the wrong direction, to an inert and unrecoverable past.

I don’t mean to suggest that there are no constructive arguments concerning reparations that are rooted in a corrective justice approach (see Winter 2006 and 2014, Bernstein 2009, and Sammons 2012 for diverse examples). Yet many have argued that a “juridical,” or “tort,” or “corrective justice” model is often inadequate or unhelpful applied precisely to the kinds of cases that reparations are meant to address, including mass violence in conflict, genocide and crimes against humanity, systemic gross human rights violations, severe political repression, or extreme intergenerational injustices with long histories (Thompson 2002; Brooks 2004; De Greiff 2006b; Walker 2006a; Yamamoto et al. 2007; Satz 2007; Verdeja 2007; Gray 2010a; Philpott 2012). Here I add the point that corrective justice not only fails to guide understanding or action in many such cases, but can function affirmatively as a lever to deflect, demote, or dismiss reparations claims as hopeless, wrong-headed, or destructive. Impossibility arguments serve a kind of reparations skepticism at a time when a distinctive new global practice and “reparations ethos” has been taking form (Falk 2006: 485; see also Barkan 2000).

A New Practice of Reparations

If we think that reparations for these massive and complex wrongs are indeed a requirement of justice, we need alternative ways of theorizing the concerns, aims, and measures of reparative justice. In doing so, I believe we should study the new practice of reparations that emerged in the later twentieth century, a practice that has been shaped by activities by and on behalf of victims of human rights violations and historical injustice around the globe. The multiform character of reparations in this new practice sets a task for the theory of reparative justice: to understand what are the underlying concerns that explain the complexity and diversity of reparations.

It is widely agreed that the payment of reparations by West Germany to individual survivors of the Holocaust after WWII introduced a genuinely new practice, treating individuals, and not only nations, as the subjects of claims against states for reparations for grave violations (Colonomos 2006). Extensive programs of reparations for victims and families were instituted in waves in the aftermath of brutal military governments in Latin American countries, especially Chile and Argentina, that engaged in repression, torture, disappearance, and illegal detention of their citizens. The United States legislated a reparations program in 1988 for Japanese-Americans interned during the World War Two, over 40 years after the events. After two decades of study, the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 endorsed the “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law” distilling a set of measures for making full and effective reparation, understood as a human right in the case of severe abuses (United Nations 2006). The Basic Principles did not invent this new practice of reparations. It has developed out of popular and civil society movements representing the needs and expectations of victims and their societies as well as the work of domestic and international institutions. The Basic Principles consolidated a wide-ranging and accelerating set of developments in many places: actual programs of reparations; recommendations of appropriate reparations by truth commissions; decisions by international courts (especially the Inter-American Court of Human Rights); reparations by private entities; reparations proposals and demands by NGOs and victim advocacy groups; domestic and

international lawsuits seeking compensation; and legal and academic scholarship (see De Greiff 2006; Johnston and Slyomovics 2009; Du Plessis and Peté 2007).

Section IX of the Basic Principles stress five categories of reparations measures. The first two are the familiar ones of *restitution*, interpreted broadly to include liberty, legal standing, residence, citizenship, and employment, and *compensation* for both economically assessable and moral damage. A third is medical, psychological, social, and legal *rehabilitation* services. The last two categories involve very diverse interventions. *Satisfaction* includes eight distinct measures: to stop ongoing violations; to verify and disclose the truth publicly; to search for and rebury those disappeared or abducted; to officially declare the reputation and rights of victims; to apologize publicly; to sanction responsible parties administratively or judicially; to commemorate and honor victims; and to include an accurate account of violations in educational materials. The final category, *guarantees of non-repetition*, includes various preventive measures including institutional reforms: an independent judiciary; due process guarantees; civilian control of the military; training and education of public officials; monitoring; and institutional and legal reforms. These are all measures that have been recommended repeatedly in truth commission reports and are increasingly ordered by some international courts (Schonsteiner 2007).

I want to call attention to three features of the practice described. First, the Basic Principles are addressed to states, and state responsibility for reparations is assumed. Several kinds of measures mentioned can only be provided by state institutions. Where other persons or entities are liable, they should provide reparations; if other liable parties are unable or unwilling, states should establish national programs. Second, the Principles expressly recognize that victimization of individual persons may also be directed against groups of persons who are targeted collectively, and that states should develop procedures to allow groups of victims to pursue reparations. These two features are not my principal concern here, but they suggest significant dimensions in which the corrective justice model—with its individualized picture of injury and liability to compensate—does not capture or explain distinctive features of the practice.

It is the third feature I want to emphasize here. The Basic Principles do not rank the different categories of reparations measures. Restitution and compensation are paradigmatic legal remedies, but practice has revealed that acknowledgment, responsibility-taking, truth telling, apology, and memorialization, as well as credible guarantees of non-repetition, often turn out to be foremost in importance to individuals and groups who have suffered human rights abuses (in contrast, for interstate remedies, see Shelton 2002). The common distinction between “material” and “symbolic” reparations, while useful for some purposes, can be very misleading here. A symbol or symbolic gesture is what stands in for or represents something else that is absent or only indicated. To call some reparations—such as apologies, truth telling, or commemoration—“symbolic” is to imply that they are not the real thing. Yet one thing learned in contemporary reparations attempts is how essential it is to victims of wrongs that money be accompanied by, or be part of, truth telling, responsibility-taking, and gestures of respect toward victims. Even where it is necessary, money is not sufficient (see Hamber 2009 and Mazurana et al. 2013). Money may be refused or understood as insulting in the absence of honest accountability, respectful recognition, and clear admission of wrongs. The “material/symbolic” distinction also fails to capture the concrete but expressive role played by preventive reforms. To undertake major change in societal institutions is costly in money as well as social and political capital; but as part of a program of reparations it also sends to victims and to society at large the message that what happened to the victims is simply intolerable and cannot be allowed to happen again.

The diversity of measures that constitute reparations is striking; these measures recognize, respect, enable, and support victims not only materially, but psychologically, legally, civically, and

politically. Restitution and compensation have a central role, and in many cases there can be no substitute for material redress. But there are other essential dimensions of reparations, including gestures and actions that dignify and empower victims and that stress a societal commitment to structural reform so that the suffering of victims is not repeated. While some of these reparative measures could in principle be implemented by individuals responsible for wrongs, most of them are or entail societal responsibilities for publicly communicating the dignity and deservingness of victims and society's obligation to create the conditions in which victims can not only deal with their injuries but continue their lives as full civil and political actors. These measures thus address a problem larger than discrete injury; they recognize a problem of social and political standing that may be both a cause and a result of gross violations. A theory of reparative justice should try to illuminate what the multiform reparations agenda is seeking to address.

Rethinking Reporative Justice

Several new approaches in theorizing reparative justice have emerged. They have in common a focus on the roles of reparations (and other post-conflict or transitional measures) in reconfiguring or reconstituting the flawed moral and political relationships that invite abuses and are revealed by the specific forms abuses take. The point is not restoring the status quo ante but affirming a new baseline for moral and political engagement going forward. These accounts are not uncritical concerning reparations efforts; they offer normative perspectives from which reparations attempts can be found more or less apt or adequate. They are not skeptical of the project of reparations as such; instead, they are prompted by new and diverse forms of reparations and by renewed attention to questions of historical injustice. Many of these theories see reparations as establishing new relationships of recognition, trust, equality, respect, atonement, or reconciliation (on civic recognition and trust, see De Greiff 2006b; on relations of respect and reciprocity, see Thompson 2002, Satz 2007, Verdeja 2007, and Murphy 2010). The central idea of my own view is that reparations are about demonstrating (rather than establishing) relations of accountability and reciprocity that no process or program of reparations can itself guarantee. Reparations are a medium for the contentious yet hopeful negotiation in the present of proper recognition of the past and proper terms of relation for the future. As such they require mutually reinforcing commitments in multiple registers of relationship: money, acknowledgment, public ritual, social change.

Corrective justice—the idea that one party or group can hold another to account for wrongful harm suffered, can pose terms of restitution or compensation, and can seek a resolution in that way—*presupposes* that parties stand in relations of effective accountability and reciprocity, and can activate these relations through institutional channels when they seek correction or redress. Where, for example, a legal system gives its citizens rights to a remedy for unjust harms or losses they have suffered and where citizens in fact have access to the institutions that can provide or enforce those remedies, corrective justice describes one standard implementation of justice in repair. Even in societies that provide this legal avenue, however, not all citizens may have equal access to these institutions and some may have none. Some citizens may not have reason to expect a fair hearing or may find that a legal system that historically permitted or enforced their oppression, dispossession, or subordination now sets terms for remedies that disqualify their claims, as unsuccessful legal actions by African-Americans for corporate reparations have found (Brophy 2006 and Sammons 2012). Yet it is the *absence* of precisely these relations that lies at the root of many of the profound harms and gross abuses where reparations are sought. Relationships of accountability and reciprocity may not have obtained at the root historically, as in the case

of chattel slavery in the United States and its aftermaths of segregation, domination, and racial violence. They might have been inconsistent and fragile, as in the case of treaties and alliances made with indigenous peoples and then quickly and willfully discarded for conquest, genocide, and dispossession. They might be shallowly or selectively functional until historical resentments, current power struggles, or competition for resources gives political opportunists an opening with violent consequences, as in Germany in the 1930s, or in the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda in the 1990s. The details in all their variety are crucial for reparations in any particular case. But a common factor is that reparations typically seek repair in a context where accountability and reciprocity themselves are at issue (Walker 2014).

Accountability is the relationship in which we see each other as answerable to each other under some common standards—whether I can reprimand you for your table manners, or insist on an apology for your lack of consideration, or take you to court for a breach of contract. Accountability relations can take formal legal or institutional forms, but upholding common standards of *any kind*—from etiquette to human rights—requires accountability between us. If you have the power to be unmoved by my demands, to be indifferent to the harms you cause me, or even to retaliate against me for presuming that I can hold you to account, we do not stand in this most basic moral and social relations. And if I have the privilege of assuming that what goes for me need not go for you—that I deserve protection but you deserve none; that I can demand your respect, but you may not expect mine—we are not in a relationship of reciprocity at some level, perhaps even at the level of human decency. It is the absence of accountability and reciprocity that lies at the root of the kinds of gross violations and profound harms to which programs of reparations respond. I suggest that *signifying the possibility of a relationship of accountability and reciprocity* where there has been none, or where it has been dangerously unreliable, is the fundamental task of reparations—to which all its varied measures are a means. In some cases substantial material restitution or compensation will be indispensable but it will never by itself be enough unless it is accompanied by other measures that signify clear acknowledgment, responsibility, and the intent to do justice (Walker 2013). This is something we can begin to see in the new practice of reparations.

It is also visible in a spreading rejection of the corrective justice or “tort model” of reparations and in the emergence of related but contending accounts of reparative justice. Erik Yamamoto, Sandra Kim, and Abigail Holden see international practice as a model of “remaking societal understandings of who is worthy of redress” (Yamamoto et al. 2007: 74). David Gray writes that the reparations must aim at new social and material conditions in order to “achieve a sustainable new equilibrium among members of groups,” and to situate victims “as individuals capable of being wronged” (Gray 2010b, 1101–102). Pablo De Greiff argues that reparations must aim at recognition of victims as bearers of rights, and at reestablishing trust between citizens and in their institutions, based on confidence that shared values and norms are real and regarded as binding on all (De Greiff 2006b). In these views and others we see the beginning of a genuine project of theorizing reparative justice, creating a field of contending approaches with potentially different explanations of, and implications for, reparations practice.

My own view of reparations emphasizes the central but neglected role of hope (Walker 2006b). Since reparations can only ever be particular measures or programs at particular times, they cannot bear the whole weight of actually remaking understandings, bringing about a new equilibrium, or establishing trust. They can only inspire a hopeful willingness for victims of injustice to believe in and to try for better relationships, *if* others will struggle towards an understanding of past wrongs and failed relationships, and accept the need for adequate gestures of amends for the past and strong guarantees for the future that truly reflect an engagement among equals. If others become

accountable—by actually accounting and making amends—then hope is reasonable, and it becomes possible to seek equilibrium, build trust, and operate on a premise of basically respectful treatment.

Reorienting reparations to the issue of reconstructing relationships—socially, legally, and economically—might in turn let us look more clearly at the real practical problems of reparations rather than at a set of repetitive academic debates. The real problem is what I will call the “reparations deficit.”

The Reparations Deficit

Despite ever more refined and complex understandings of reparations that are reflected in the Basic Principles, not much, and not much that is truly attuned to actual needs, perceptions, and desires of victims of mass violence and injustice, is being done in the world in the way of reparations. The main reparations deficit is that reparations are the least favored among measures that are seen as “transitional justice.” A recently published data-base on transitional justice measures around the globe finds that financial reparations trail far behind either criminal trials or truth commissions; all trail miserably behind some forms of amnesty—an official policy to just the close books and move on (Olsen et al. 2010, Appendix 4). Ruben Carranza, Director of the Reparative Justice Program of the International Center for Transitional Justice, comments: “Reparations are arguably the most victim-centered of the various approaches to fighting impunity; but in recent years, most of the international resources meant for transitional justice and peacebuilding has gone to operating war crimes tribunals, occasionally to truth commissions, certainly to reintegrating ex-combatants, but seldom, if ever, to directly benefit victims of human rights violations” (Carranza 2009: 4). Reparations are a low priority domestically and internationally in both stable and transitional societies. The other deficit is one *within* current practices of reparations. Victims of violence and severe injustice who receive reparations receive little, have what they receive determined by others, and receive what those others decide it is affordable or efficient to provide (see Johnston and Slyomovics 2009 and Rubio-Marín 2009).

If we ask why reparations happen so infrequently, amount to so little, and often fail to engage with actual needs and perspectives of the individuals and groups who seek justice, we need to understand what is at stake in reparations struggles, and it is by no means only money. I have suggested that restitution and compensation are often crucial instruments of reparations, but they are not, as the corrective justice model would have it, what is exclusively at stake. It is a renegotiation of relationship that reparations always symbolize and promise: they are an attempt *in the present* to acknowledge and repudiate what happened before, and to begin a transformation by attempting a first step, here and now, toward defining and creating relations of accountability and reciprocity.

If a nation, institution, or group avoids making or refuses to make reparations in cases of gross abuse or manifest histories of severe injustice, they hold themselves, even now as before, beyond *accountability* to the people they have injured or whose mistreatment it falls to their society to repair. They see themselves as having the power to refuse demands of justice from those who deserve reparations. Since compelling calls for reparations come from those who have suffered histories of injustice that have degraded their status socially and economically, or who have borne the brunt of conflict because their economic or social vulnerability, they are generally not in a strong position to compel the fulfillment of their claims. If a nation, institution, or group attempts reparations without seeking to hear and understand the needs and perspectives of those who would receive reparations then there is a failure of *reciprocity*. Those who would decide reparations based

solely on their own perspective and assessment of what is due and what they are willing to offer, reserve the right to decide *for* others rather than with them the nature and meaning of the victims' losses. Even now as before, they do not show a willingness to meet the others on the ground of shared standards and mutual responsibility.

Accountability and reciprocity are the basic terms of moral relationship, and they are what reparations, whatever form they take, must try to *signify*. If a struggle for reparations begins to engage, it is a medium for beginning to move forward toward a picture of what relationships of accountability and reciprocity might look like where they have not existed before. Unlike an exercise of corrective justice that "settles up" and closes the case, reparations open that passageway. They are the beginning, not the end, of a different history. But they are only a beginning and it is beyond the scope of reparations themselves to do more than exemplify, through meaningful and costly deeds, a promise to reconstruct relations; the achievement may take decades or generations to secure. To understand the resistance within societies to negotiating *in the present* a mutual understanding of just relations—taking responsibility for a shameful past and making uncertain but hopeful commitments to a better future—is to appreciate what a remarkable, if fragile and limited, achievement reparations are.

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